

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 217 821

HE 015 258

AUTHOR Lorenz, Gail
TITLE Faculty and Student Views of Information Systems to Improve Course Selection.
PUB DATE Mar 82
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, March 19-23, 1982).
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Advising; College Faculty; College Students; *Course Descriptions; *Course Evaluation; Courses; Decision Making; Feedback; Higher Education; Information Dissemination; *Information Needs; Instructional Improvement; Program Evaluation; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; Student Reaction; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Student Course Information Project; *University of Minnesota

ABSTRACT

Two components in making decisions about selecting courses are examined: course descriptions by instructors and evaluation of instruction by students. Faculty attitudes toward student evaluations in general and their attitudes about evaluations being used for instructional improvement, administrative decisions, and course selection are discussed, based on findings reported in the literature. In addition, a project at the University of Minnesota that incorporates student evaluations of faculty and courses with instructor course descriptions into a system for helping students to select courses is described. The Student Course Information Project (SCIP) was a cooperative enterprise among students, faculty, and administration to provide information for advising students about selecting courses. After a pilot study conducted during spring quarter 1979, SCIP began operating in the academic year 1979-1980. The procedure included collecting information and disseminating it in printed materials. Participating faculty members completed an authorization/identification form and a Course Information Profile (CIP). Specific details about the course included responsibilities of teaching assistants, types of instructional aids used, types and formats of examinations, grading, intended student audience by type of academic program, out-of-class learning activities, and methods of instruction. Students completed Course Opinion Profiles which involved ratings of the instructor, the course, and the student's learning and efforts. Information on students and on the student's use and opinion of the SCIP materials for program planning and course selection were included. Faculty and student views about SCIP are reported. (SW)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Faculty and Student Views of Information
Systems to Improve Course Selection

Gail Lorenz
Measurement Services Center
University of Minnesota

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gail Lorenz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

Presentation at the symposium "Using Course Evaluation Data
in Selecting Courses: Yet Another Emergent and Controversial Use,"
held at the 1982 Annual Convention of the American Educational
Research Association, held in New York City, March 19-23, 1982.

Faculty and Student Views of Information
Systems to Improve Course Selection

Abstract

This presentation looks at two components in making decisions about selecting courses: course descriptions by instructors and evaluation of instruction by students. Faculty attitudes toward student evaluations and their use are discussed. One particular system, the Student Course Information Project, is described. Faculty and student opinions about the project are discussed. The conclusion about successful program planning is that information about both the course and the instructor are needed.

Faculty and Student Views of Information
Systems to Improve Course Selection

Evaluation of instruction can be categorized into three main areas based on who will be using the information: the instructor being evaluated, the administrator in the institution where the instructor is teaching, and the student who is taking, or will be taking, courses at that same institution. Why the information was gathered is directly related to who uses that information and helps to define the categories of instructional evaluation.

The kind of information necessary for making decisions should be complete information (Doyle, 1979). Student evaluation of instruction is only one part of the data needed for improving instruction, making administrative decisions, and deciding on courses to take. Complete information is provided through evaluations by the instructor, other instructors, administrators, and the public in the form of questionnaires, interviews, observations, and reviews of accomplishments. Some of these evaluations are more useful than others for the different decision-makers, but none of them is adequate alone.

Knowing that evaluations should be used in combination for ideal results, this presentation looks at two components in making decisions about selecting courses: course descriptions by instructors and evaluations of instruction by students. First, faculty attitudes toward student evaluations and their use in improvement of instruction and in administrative decisions are discussed. One particular system, the Student Course Information Project, is described.

Faculty and student opinions about the project are discussed. Conclusions are made about how such information systems are thought to achieve improvement in planning programs of study.

Faculty Views about Student Evaluation of Instruction

One source of information for making decisions about selecting courses is student evaluations. The present section discusses faculty attitudes toward student evaluations in general and their attitudes about those evaluations being used for instructional improvement, administrative decisions, and course selection.

Student Evaluation in General. Page (1974) listed several remarks by teachers concerning evaluations by students: (1) students give good ratings only if they are getting good marks, (2) students give good ratings for popularity instead of teaching, (3) students lack experience for accurately judging teaching, and (4) students do not understand the connection between teaching and research. Most of these fears were not supported by research studying reliability and validity of student evaluations of instruction. Actually, students were found to rate instructors highly. This finding was also reported by Centra (1979). Page's conclusion was that if teachers understood the facts about student evaluations, they might be better prepared to handle evaluation rather than to be defensive about the situation.

Self-improvement. When an instructor thinks of evaluation for self-improvement, the process is usually considered to be a part of the teaching assignment (Bolton, 1973). This attitude would help to alleviate the instructor's anxiety related to being judged and controlled by others on the basis of the results of the evaluation. If the purpose of an evaluation is self-improvement, then information should be gathered continuously from all relevant participants

in a variety of ways and seen only by the instructor. A survey in 1976 of faculty development practices at 756 campuses in the United States found that student evaluations of instruction were the type of evaluation used most frequently and were highly effective in helping faculty improve (Centra, 1979). Page (1974) also found that student evaluations helped in improving quality of instruction.

The impact of student evaluations upon improvement of instruction has been found to vary according to instructors' self-evaluations. Instructors who rate themselves unrealistically highly show changes in instruction after only half a semester (Centra, 1979). This study also found that instructors do change if given more time than half a semester, and if they have information to help them interpret evaluation results. Reviewing the evaluation results with a colleague can help in devising solutions to teaching problems and also in finding constructive suggestions in what could otherwise be seen as personal criticism (McKeachie, 1978).

Other factors involved in improvement of instruction were the motivation of the instructor to want to change and the changeability of the qualities of instruction (Doyle, 1975). Clark and Keller (1947) found that teachers who repeated using rating scales in their classes received continuously higher ratings indicating that teachers reacted to the earlier ratings and improved their teaching ability.

Page (1974) reviewed a variety of literature and found that students and teachers agreed on what constitutes good teaching. Studies cited by Miller (1972) agree with this finding. The teaching qualities considered to be important criteria were professional competence, positive attitude, fairness, and interest in students.

In contrast to agreeing on the qualities of a good teacher, students and teachers disagreed on what factors produced a good teacher. Students' opinions were more confined to the classroom teaching, where self-evaluation and evaluations by colleagues incorporated performance outside the classroom. Evaluations by administrators concentrate on the amount of knowledge a teacher has, which credits behavior outside the classroom that student evaluations generally do not include.

Clark and Keller (1947) concluded that student evaluations of instruction were useful as a technique for improving instruction, but were "highly questionable" for administrative purposes. The next section looks further at using evaluations in administrative decisions.

Administrative Decision-Making. Recently, the political aspects of teaching have become publicly important (McNeil, 1981). Student ratings are important in providing information for tenure and promotion decisions, in proving to legislatures that institutions think that teaching is important, and in giving students some input into their own educational situation.

Students have been found to be quite lenient in their judgments about teaching ability (Centra, 1979; Page, 1974). Therefore, data should be collected with a wide range of choices on a rating scale in order to avoid every instructor receiving the same rating. The scale will be accused of being biased if the differentiation is made only among the complimentary choices, so the range should extend equally in both directions.

Other considerations to be made in using student evaluations for administrative decisions are getting a representative sample of students and courses for the instructor being evaluated, using global evaluative statements, and comparing results with normative data on comparable instructors (Centra, 1979; Doyle, 1979).

All of the objections by teachers against using student evaluations for the purpose of self-improvement apply also to the use of those evaluations for making decisions about hiring, promotion, and tenure. However, now the decisions are out of the control of the instructor so that the previous objections are stronger. The administrator should use not only the convenient, quantifiable student rating scale, but also information from other sources (such as the instructor and the instructor's colleagues). Information is needed concerning the type of course, the instructor's goals and teaching techniques, the instructor's general attitudes and philosophy of teaching, and the student population taught by the instructor (McKeachie, 1978). Thus, careful judgment based on information appropriately obtained from various sources with well-designed instruments is necessary in making personnel decisions (Doyle, 1975). In that context, student evaluations are useful.

Course Selection. Considering that student evaluations have been found to be effective in improving quality of instruction and useful in giving accountability in making administrative decisions, on the basis of reliability and validity, it is reasonable to suppose that they would be valuable information to include when making decisions about planning academic programs and selecting courses. The reservations are that because the evaluations are published, the interpretations do not have the aid of explanations beyond the form used and the evaluations may be considered current when actually they are in previous surveys that are still available in the publication (Doyle, 1975). McKeachie (1978) stated that description and comments that were not evaluative would be most useful in guiding students to select courses while removing the threatening aspect toward teacher evaluations. The student as a consumer calls

for more information in choosing courses than what is contained in the usual college bulletin (Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, 1975). Teaching and course evaluations could help to fill this need.

The next section describes a project at the University of Minnesota that incorporated student evaluations of faculty and courses with instructor course descriptions into a system for helping students to select courses.

Student Course Information Project (SCIP)

The Student Course Information Project (SCIP) was a cooperative enterprise among students, faculty, and administration to provide information for advising students about selecting courses. It was emphasized by the University Senate Committee on Educational Policy that the purpose of the project did not include evaluating individual faculty members for administrative decisions. The results of the student evaluations could be included if the college faculty approved that purpose as part of its normal governance procedures.

After a pilot study during spring quarter 1979, SCIP began operating in the academic year 1979-80. The procedure included collecting information and disseminating it in printed materials.

Two types of printed publications contained course descriptions and evaluations that were intended to expand the scope and improve the quality of information available to students and advisors in planning academic programs.

SCIP Coordinators. One of the first steps in the procedures of SCIP was for the staff to establish an administrative contact in each academic department who was responsible for finding faculty in the department to participate. This coordinator helped the SCIP staff to distribute and collect forms to faculty and students. The time commitment in SCIP by coordinators varied from a few hours per quarter to one hour per faculty member participating. Usually, contact

between coordinator and faculty was by a memorandum. Some coordinators checked forms completed for accuracy and completeness, but most simply forwarded materials to the SCIP office.

Course Information Profile (CIP). Each faculty member completed an authorization/identification form and a Course Information Profile (CIP). All faculty participation was voluntary, and the authorization form indicated that the instructor authorized publication of information about the course. Authorization could be for both the course description and evaluations or for only one or the other.

Information about the course was given in the Course Information Profile (CIP). This form requested instructor's name, course title, and a description of the purpose of the course. Specific details about the course were given by checklists about the responsibilities of teaching assistants, types of instructional aids used, and types and formats of examinations. Another question asked for the number of ex. ns given. One question asked for a ranking of the intended student audience by type of academic program. Another asked for the cost of required materials. A question about the basis for grading asked for the percentage of emphasis on various course activities. Items under methods of instruction included instruction time in hours per activity, class sizes for various types of activity, and the course emphasis by percentage of each type of learning. Out-of-class learning activities were described by giving numbers of pages of required reading, numbers of various types of assignments, hours of expected effort, and hours of help available to students. One result of this questionnaire might be a heightened awareness of the instructors of the extent of work and effort that is required of students taking their courses. Course objectives might also be clarified.

Course Opinion Profile (COP). Students completed Course Opinion Profiles (COP) in the middle of a quarter so that they were familiar with the course content and instruction but not overwhelmed by heavy demands that happen toward the end of the quarter. The form used in the pilot study of SCIP was changed only in the ordering of the questions. This reflected the student reactions measured by the questionnaire about the form given to a subset of students (N=93) in the pilot study. Generally speaking, the process and content were acceptable. Their answers to what information they would like to have in selecting courses determined the future order of the form's questions.

The form began with an explanation of the purpose of the evaluation and then asked for identification of the course and instructor. Six questions asked for ratings (on a five-point scale) of the instructor, the course, and the student's learning and effort. Four questions were checklists about the student's status, grades, and reasons for taking the course. The final question asked about the student's use and opinion of the SCIP materials for program planning and course selection.

Publications. The results of the CIP and the COP were published in two forms, complete information in the Courseguide Bluebook and abridged information in a newspaper version. Each page of the Bluebook reproduced the CIP and a computerized summary of the COP tabulations. The abridged version gave course number, instructor's name, the quarter the data was collected, cost of materials for the course, expected out-of-class effort, number of exams, basis of grade, and course emphasis from the CIP form for each course. From the COP form were student status, why enrolled, opinion about teaching, and opinion about the course. Each course's information was given in one line in the abridged version

Bluebooks were distributed to every registration area for use by students and to every adviser. They were also available in libraries, student unions, and department offices. The newspaper abridged version was either included in registration packets or easily available to students at registration locations. Posters and advertisements in the university newspaper helped to call attention to SCIP and its role in student registration.

Evaluation. SCIP was created by the University Senate which is composed of both students and faculty. Its purpose was to provide students with information to assist them in selecting courses. Built into the project was an evaluation to assess the procedures used to collect the data and report it. Continuing evaluations of the project costs and benefits would be considered in recommending that the project continue and be extended beyond the Twin Cities to the coordinate campuses (Duluth, Morris, Crookston, and Waseca).

Evaluations were conducted following the pilot study and during the academic years 1979-80 and 1980-81. The project was started with the intention of having a four-year trial period with an extensive evaluation of the end of the academic year 1982-83. The next section describes faculty reactions to SCIP that were found in the evaluation studies (Hendel, 1980, 1981).

Faculty Views about SCIP

After using SCIP materials during spring quarter 1979 an evaluation was conducted for the pilot project that involved 306 courses in 12 departments (Hendel, 1980). Part of that evaluation was interviewing SCIP coordinators. They reported that faculty in their departments showed little response to SCIP, either positive or negative. Those who were strongly critical were the ones who disliked all student evaluations. Most faculty were cooperative,

believing that SCIP was something to demonstrate accountability to the legislature. Only a few faculty asked for specific information about how the results would be used. Participation in SCIP increased from 750 courses in 69 departments during 1979-80 to 789 courses in 89 departments during 1980-81. Based on the fall 1981 numbers, the projected participation for 1981-82 is about 900 courses. This steady increase in participation could be due to increased acceptance of the project by faculty and familiarity with procedures by the coordinators.

Insert Table 1 about here

Some concerns expressed by faculty to their SCIP coordinators and in comments on the survey evaluation in the pilot study included the questions in the forms used by students to evaluate the course the the instructor. Faculty felt the questions were too general and did not get enough information to adequately evaluate their courses. The possibility of too much evaluation was questioned when COP would be used in addition to another evaluation form the instructor usually used in the course. These criticisms were more often expressed by faculty in higher level courses for upper class and graduate students.

Other concerns revolved around the usefulness of the information. Some faculty did not think the currently available course descriptions needed supplementing and viewed CIP as just more paperwork. Usefulness was also questioned when the instructor for a course had not been designated early enough to be printed in the class schedule so that students would know who it would be at the time of registration. Estimates of the extent of usefulness of information to the students were highest for what purposes the course had, and lowest for type of examinations, grading, and outside class activities.

Table 1
Participation in SCIP

Time	Number of Colleges	Number of Departments	Number of Instructors Completing CIP's	Number of Courses Completing CIP's
Spring 1979 (Pilot)	9	12	306	266
1979 - 1980	11 + ROTC	69	750	750
1980 - 1981	11 + ROTC	89	789	789
Fall 1981	11 + ROTC	62	318	318

Insert Table 2 about here

One faculty member who has the reputation of being a good teacher was reported to have told one of the coordinators that students must have used the SCIP materials because there was a really good group of students in the class the next quarter.

Student Views about SCIP

The pilot study about SCIP included a survey of students asking for opinions about the COP form and SCIP in general. This survey consisted of a five item questionnaire given to students either the last day of class spring quarter or at the time of the final examination. This was approximately one week after the COP forms were completed. Data was obtained from 87 students.

One question asked which of the different types of COP information they would want to know about concerning courses and instructors. The information they wanted most was about the instructor's teaching. Next of interest were the instructor's organization and interest. The overall course rating and student learning were moderately important, as were student effort and students' reasons for taking the course. Student grades and student status were of least interest.

Insert Table 3 about here

Comments about the COP form indicated concern about the extent to which the results would be used, as the faculty had commented. Also, students wondered about the lack of scope of questions about courses and instructors and allowing specific evaluative comments. These also paralleled the faculty comments about the evaluation forms.

Table 2

Faculty Estimates of Probable Usefulness of
Various Information to Students Surveyed During
Pilot Project Spring 1979, by level of course

Type of Information		N	Response Category						$\bar{x}$	SD
			Not Very Useful		Somewhat Useful		Very Useful			
			N	%	N	%	N	%		
Examinations	Total	214	48	22.4	117	54.7	49	22.9	2.00	.60
	1-level	44	4	9.1	24	54.5	16	36.4	2.27	.12
	3-level	54	7	13.0	35	64.8	12	22.2	2.09	.59
	5-level	52	13	25.0	28	53.8	11	21.2	1.96	.18
	8-level	25	11	44.0	8	32.0	6	24.0	1.80	.82
Methods	Total	216	40	18.5	109	50.5	67	31.0	2.13	.69
	1-level	44	8	18.2	14	31.8	22	50.0	2.32	.77
	3-level	54	9	16.7	29	53.7	16	29.6	2.13	.67
	5-level	52	6	11.5	31	59.6	15	28.8	2.17	.62
	8-level	25	6	24.0	10	40.0	9	36.0	2.12	.78
Purpose of Course	Total	215	20	9.3	63	29.3	132	61.4	2.52	.66
	1-level	46	2	4.3	14	30.4	30	65.2	2.61	.58
	3-level	54	6	11.1	16	29.6	32	59.3	2.48	.69
	5-level	52	3	5.8	16	30.8	33	63.5	2.58	.60
	8-level	25	3	12.0	6	24.0	16	64.0	2.52	.71
Outside of Class	Total	215	59	27.4	95	44.2	61	28.4	2.01	.75
	1-level	45	11	24.4	17	37.8	17	37.8	2.13	.79
	3-level	54	16	29.6	20	37.0	18	33.3	2.04	.80
	5-level	50	10	20.0	26	52.0	14	28.0	2.08	.70
	8-level	25	7	28.0	11	44.0	7	28.0	2.00	.76
Grading	Total	216	45	20.8	125	57.9	46	21.3	2.00	.65
	1-level	44	3	6.8	25	56.8	16	36.4	2.30	.59
	3-level	54	7	13.0	35	64.8	12	22.2	2.09	.59
	5-level	52	12	13.1	31	59.6	9	17.3	1.94	.64
	8-level	75	11	44.0	9	36.0	5	20.0	1.76	.78

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of students who indicated specific Course Opinion Profile items would be important in their selection of courses, by level and department, 1979

Level Department	Total N	Student Learning		Student Effort		Instructor Interest		Instructor Organization		Instructor Teaching		Overall Course Rating		Student Status		Student Grades		Student Reasons	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1 - level																			
German	16	9	56.3	5	31.3	8	50.0	11	68.8	13	81.3	5	31.3	2	12.5	4	25.0	4	25.0
Family Social Science	3	3	100.0	2	66.6	3	100.0	3	66.6	3	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	66.6
3 - level																			
Child Psychology	16	7	43.8	7	43.8	8	50.0	6	37.5	10	62.5	9	56.3	6	37.5	8	50.0	5	31.3
Ecology and Behavioral Biology	24	12	50.0	6	25.0	17	70.8	15	62.5	20	83.3	17	70.8	2	8.3	3	12.5	6	25.0
5 - level																			
Chemical Engineering	16	8	50.0	3	18.8	12	75.0	14	87.5	12	75.0	11	68.8	2	12.5	0	0	3	18.8
8 - level																			
Child Psychology	12	5	41.7	3	25.0	10	83.3	10	83.3	10	83.3	7	58.3	2	16.7	2	16.7	4	33.3
TOTAL	87	44	50.6	26	29.9	58	66.7	59	67.8	68	78.2	49	56.3	14	16.1	17	19.5	24	27.6

Even though studies show that SCIP materials were not used very much so far, students surveyed maintained that SCIP is important and should continue. Of 417 students surveyed in 1979, 89.6% were in favor of the project. Similarly, a study in spring quarter 1981 (N=204) showed 89.9% in favor of SCIP.

Insert Table 4 about here

In fall quarter 1980 a study of 780 students in seven courses found that 93.3% were in favor of course descriptions and 68.9% were in favor of summaries of previous students' evaluations, reflecting strong support of SCIP.

Insert Table 5 about here

Of those students in the spring 1981 study, 85.9% (N=61) made further comments. Their comments conveyed the ideas that it was nice to know what to expect (N=23), helpful to have students' opinions (N=10), important to avoid poor teachers (N=4), valuable to have information but not opinions (N=4), necessary to have more courses and more information to make it useful (N=4), and probable that most students won't or can't use the information (N=2).

Besides expanding the scope of what was already included in SCIP, students suggested adding information about what background requirements there were in addition to prerequisites stated in existing catalogs and also how much material would be covered during the course.

Table 4

Students' opinions concerning SCIP system, by quarter

Response	Fall 1979 Total Group (N=417)		Spring 1981 Total Group (N=204)	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly opposed	2	.5	0	0
Opposed	3	.7	2	2.9
Neutral	37	9.2	5	7.2
In favor of	141	35.1	26	37.7
Strongly in favor of	219	54.5	36	52.2
$\bar{x}$	4.42		4.39	
SD	.73		.75	

Table 5

Students' opinions about providing detailed course descriptions and previous evaluations to help select courses: Fall Quarter 1980^a

Question	Responses										$\bar{x}$	SD
	Strongly Opposed		Opposed		Neutral		In Favor Of		Strongly In Favor Of			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Opinion about providing detailed course descriptions	2	.3	4	.5	47	6.0	327	41.5	408	51.8	4.44	.65
Opinion about providing summaries of previous students' evaluations	8	1.0	28	3.6	208	26.5	334	42.5	207	26.4	3.90	.87

^aThree courses had two sections each.

What is Important to Students in Selecting Courses

During the pilot study about SCIP, 417 students were surveyed as to what they thought was useful information in selecting courses. The content of the course was the type of information they thought was the most useful. Also important were the facts that the course was required and that it satisfied a distribution requirement. These findings were repeated in the fall 1980 study.

Insert Table 6 about here

Insert Table 7 about here

Open-ended questions in the pilot study about what would make students choose between two courses reveal a full range of kinds of information from factual to evaluative. Sometimes where the class is held at what time of day was the practical point in making a decision. The relevance of the course to the subject matter field was at the other extreme for type of information.

Evaluations Help to Plan Programs and Select Courses

Perhaps the only information needed for properly planning programs and selecting courses is that which relates to the course itself such as objectives, intended audience, and content (Doyle, 1975). This need is reflected in student surveys of what information is desired. Yet the course and instructor are inseparable. Knowing what the objectives of the course are is useless information if the instructor does not meet those objectives. The instructor may believe that the objectives are being met, not realizing that the students are not viewing the situation in the same way.

Table 6

Students' ratings of importance of various factors in
their selection of courses for fall quarter 1979, by response

Factor	Response										$\bar{x}$	SD
	Not Important at All		Slightly Important		Important		Very Important		Extremely Important			
	N	X	N	X	N	X	N	X	N	X		
a. The fact that the course was required in my major	105	25.5	41	10.0	84	20.4	79	19.2	101	24.5	3.10	1.55
b. The time of day the course was offered	85	20.6	92	22.3	117	28.4	88	21.4	30	7.3	2.72	1.22
c. The size of the class	228	55.3	115	27.9	42	10.2	18	4.4	8	1.9	1.71	1.00
d. The building in which the class was held	230	57.1	105	26.1	47	11.7	14	3.5	6	1.5	1.68	.97
e. The days of the week the class met	84	20.9	137	34.1	110	27.4	52	12.9	18	4.5	2.48	1.14
f. The reputation of the instructor teaching the course	74	18.3	78	19.3	101	24.9	91	22.5	60	14.8	2.97	1.33
g. The content of the particular course	19	4.6	48	11.7	137	33.5	142	34.7	61	14.9	3.46	1.07
h. The fact that the course satisfied a distribution requirement	79	19.7	50	12.5	116	28.9	100	24.9	55	13.7	3.02	1.34
i. Other students I knew planned to register for the course	274	67.8	71	17.6	42	10.4	12	3.0	5	1.2	1.52	.89
j. The suggestions of my advisor	160	39.6	109	27.0	91	22.5	30	7.4	13	3.2	2.08	1.12
k. How easy or difficult I expected the course to be	129	31.9	134	33.2	95	23.5	32	7.9	10	2.5	2.19	1.13
l. The number of credits for the course	82	21.9	96	25.6	110	29.3	69	16.4	15	4.0	2.60	1.20

Table 7

Students' descriptions of factors important in registering for particular class Fall Quarter 1980: Total group of students enrolled in seven courses^a

Factor	Response										$\bar{x}$	SD
	Not		Slightly		Important		Very		Extremely			
	Important		Important		Important		Important		Important			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
a. My expectations about how much work I would probably have to put into the course	127	15.8	260	32.4	284	35.4	111	13.8	20	2.5	2.55	.99
b. My expectations about how the course would be taught	86	10.7	166	20.7	295	36.8	198	24.7	56	7.0	2.97	1.08
c. My expectations about the grading and testing procedures used in the course	122	15.3	212	26.5	301	37.6	127	15.9	38	4.7	2.68	1.06
d. The suggestions of my adviser	370	47.1	149	19.0	147	18.7	92	11.7	28	3.6	2.06	1.20
e. The reputation of the instructor teaching the course	313	39.2	139	17.4	157	19.6	126	15.8	64	8.0	2.36	1.35
f. Other students I knew planned to register for the course	617	77.4	104	13.0	45	5.6	24	3.0	7	.9	1.37	.80
g. The content of the course	27	3.4	58	7.3	219	27.5	306	38.4	187	23.5	3.71	1.01
h. The fact that the course satisfied a distribution requirement	168	21.0	117	14.6	184	23.0	192	24.0	138	17.3	3.02	1.39

(20)

^aThree courses had two sections each.

Information can be published in a way that is helpful to both students and instructors (McKeachie, 1978). If students and faculty cooperate with a well-designed system of collecting information and evaluations, the result will be useful to students in planning programs and to faculty in improving instruction.

References

- Bolton, D. L. Selection and evaluation of teachers. Berkeley: McCutchan, 1973.
- Centra, J. A. Determining faculty effectiveness. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979.
- Clark, K. E., and Keller, R. J. Student ratings of college teaching. In R. E. Eckert and R. J. Keller (Eds.), A University looks at its program: The report of the University of Minnesota Bureau of Institutional Research, 1942-1952. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1954.
- Doyle, K. O., Jr. Student evaluation of instruction. Lexington, Massachusetts: Heath, 1975.
- Doyle, K. O., Jr. Use of student evaluations in faculty personnel decisions. In D. R. Lewis and W. E. Becker, Jr. (Eds.), Academic rewards in higher education. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger, 1979.
- Hendel, D. D. Evaluation of the pilot project for the Student Course Information Project. University of Minnesota: Measurement Services Center, 1980.
- Hendel, D. D. Evaluation of the first year of the Student Course Information Project: Four studies during 1980-81. University of Minnesota: Measurement Services Center, 1981.
- McKeachie, W. J. Teaching tips: A guidebook for the beginning college teacher. Lexington, Massachusetts: Heath, 1978.
- McNeil, J. D. Politics of teacher evaluation. In J. Millman (Ed.) Handbook of teacher evaluation. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981.
- Miller, R. I. Evaluating faculty performance. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972.

Millman, J. (Ed.). Handbook of teacher evaluation.

Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981.

Minnesota Public Interest Research Group. MPIRG handbook: Guidelines
for initiating teaching and course evaluation. Minneapolis: Minnesota
Public Interest Research Group, 1975.

Page, C. F. Student evaluation of teaching: the American experience.

London: Society for Research into Higher Education, 1974.